

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, September 21, 2012

Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott:

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2. Beacon Charter science teacher Jessica Walters named 2013 Rhode Island [Teacher of the Year](#)

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3. Background checks required for participants in school-based [mentoring programs](#)
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- 10.** *Reminder:* RIDE to host in-person SLO Peer Review and Support Sessions

Other:

11. Applications sought for Prudential [Spirit of Community Awards](#)
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Action Item Calendar

Today (September 21): LEA testing [schedules](#) due
November 1: [Presidential Scholar](#) nominations due
November 1: PARCC readiness updates due (see below)

Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott:

1. NECAP Science results show gains at all school levels

Yesterday (Thursday), we released the 2012 NECAP Science results, and we were very pleased with the overall statewide improvements. Student proficiency rates increased at all tested grade levels and the statewide proficiency rate improved by 3.1 percentage points, to 34.8 percent proficient. This improvement marks the fourth consecutive year of statewide gains since the beginning of the NECAP Science assessments in 2008. Statewide, the proficiency level has improved by 11 percentage points since 2008.

Among tested elementary-school students (grade 4), 45.5 percent attained proficiency, an increase since last year of 1.8 percentage points. Among tested middle-school students (grade 8), 26.9 percent attained proficiency, an increase of 1.5 points. Among tested high-school students (grade 11), 32 percent attained proficiency, an improvement of 6.3 points.

Although we should all be proud of these statewide improvements on the 2012 NECAP Science assessments, the persistent achievement gaps across all grade levels remain a significant concern that we must work to address.

Here is a link to our complete report on the NECAP Science results:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/Results.aspx>

2. Beacon Charter science teacher Jessica Walters named 2013 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year

On Wednesday, at our annual recognition ceremony, Celebrating Educator Excellence, Governor Chafee announced that Jessica Waters, a science teacher at the Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, is the 2013 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year. Jessica, who has been teaching at Beacon for four years, is known not only for her innovative work as a science teacher but also for her dedication to the welfare of her students, in part through her role as the founder of the Beacon chapter of Students Against Destructive Decisions. Jessica's pathway to the teaching profession was not an easy one: she dropped out of high school in the 10th grade, worked several jobs to support herself, and then returned to school, earning a GED, a

degree from CCRI, and degree in education from RIC. Her story shows that everything is possible, if you have the will – a real inspiration for all Rhode Island students. We all wish her the best as she moves on to become a candidate for national Teacher of the Year.

About 90 educators from across the state received recognition at the ceremony, including the Superintendent, Principals, and Support Professionals of the Year; new National Board Certified teachers; Milken and Presidential Award winners, the Amgen Award winner; and the District Teachers of the Year. It was a great evening to recognize some of our best educators and to pause to honor all education professionals and the work you do every day in our schools and classrooms. We have posted a list of all those recognized at the ceremony on our website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/Recognition/default.aspx>

From RIDE:

3. Background checks required for participants in school-based mentoring programs

Please see the following message from our Office of Multiple Pathways and our Legal Office:

As you may know, the criminal-records review statute (RIGL 16-2-18.1) was amended last session to expand the criminal-background check requirement to persons participating in mentoring programs. We have received several questions about the amendment, and we suspect there may be some confusion in the field about the scope of the new language. The statute now applies

to school-based mentoring programs. Those programs take place during school hours on school grounds. They involve a mentor who, through the school and a mentoring program, has been matched with an elementary- or secondary-school student. The purpose of the mentoring arrangement is to provide support and assistance to the student with regard to his or her overall school performance. Again, the mentoring takes place on school property during school time. Mentors involved in this type of arrangement will need to undergo a national and state criminal-background check.

If you have any questions about the revised law, please contact Sharon Lee, Director of the Office of Multiple Pathways, at 222-8484.

4. 2012-13 Green Ribbon Schools award program announced; applications due January 15

Please see this notice from our Office of Statewide Efficiencies:

We are pleased to announce that Rhode Island will once again participate in the Green Ribbon Schools program. RIDE is looking to identify schools that have the least impact on the environment, the most positive impact on the health of students and staff, and the most effective preparation of students for careers and citizenship in the 21st century. From the pool of applicants, RIDE will submit up to four nominations to the U.S. Department of Education for national award consideration.

Modeled after Blue Ribbon Schools Program, the Green Ribbon Schools award recognized exemplary achievement in environmental impact, health, and environmental education. Rhode Island was one of 28 states to participate in the inaugural year of the program, which produced 78 national Green Ribbon Schools award recipients, including two Rhode Island schools: Classical High School and Nathan Bishop Middle School.

As Education Secretary Arne Duncan has said:

Green schools are critical to schools' fiscal health and our nation's economy. ... Environmental education and green facilities schools are as vital to individual students as they are to their schools and the nation. High standards of nutrition, fitness, and facility conditions improve student and staff health, attendance, and productivity, and enhance achievement and engagement. ... Green schools support our shared objectives of well-rounded education, healthy students, and STEM achievement.

All K-12 public and nonpublic Rhode Island Schools are eligible to apply. Schools that would like to be nominated for this award must complete this on-line application by **January 15**:

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1002797/Green-Ribbon-Schools-Rhode-Island-Application-2013>

The U.S. Department of Education will invite national winners of the Green Ribbon to participate in a ceremony in Washington, D.C. We look forward to

having many schools apply in the second year of this prestigious program.

If you have questions about the Green Ribbon Schools program, you may call Joseph da Silva, our School Construction Coordinator, at 222-4294, or e-mail him at Joseph.daSilva@ride.ri.gov.

For more information on Green Ribbon Schools, see:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Finance/Funding/construction/schoolconstruction.aspx>

5. Applications for performance-based compensation grant due October 10

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Last month, RIDE released a competitive-grant application for LEAs interested in applying for the \$250,000 performance-based compensation grant competition. The grant application is available at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/CompReform.aspx>.

The deadline for submitting an application for funding is **October 10**. A number of resources are available on our website. If you have any questions about this competition, contact Lisa M. Foehr at lisa.foehr@ride.ri.gov

6. Superintendents invited to attend Induction Coach trainings, forums

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Two additional Induction Coaches have been hired this week, and we now have a total of 26 fully released Induction Coaches. We are currently serving approximately 400 first-year teachers across Rhode Island and 40 second-year teachers in urban districts. Approximately 200 beginning teachers from across the state attended the first Beginning Teacher seminar for this year. The seminar gave them an overview of the R.I. Induction Model and a more in-depth look at Domain 2: Classroom Environment of the R.I. Teacher Evaluation Model.

We will continue to add beginning teachers to caseloads through October 31. Beginning teachers hired after October 31 will be supported in the 2013-14 school year, which follows last year's practice.

Your human-resource point person has been receiving regular updates from RIDE to verify the accuracy of the list of beginning teachers that they have been entering. You can expect to receive the names of the coaches in your district as well as the names of the beginning teachers on their caseloads by mid-October.

As we have done in the past, we are offering you the opportunity to have us come to one of your staff meetings to share program information and 2011-12 program data with all of your principals and central-office administrators. We would also be available to share information and data regarding induction with your school committees.

We would like to invite you to attend an Induction Coach training, forum, or even to shadow a coach in the field. If you are interested in attending a training, please let us know so we can be sure to have the sufficient materials at the session. If you would like to shadow a coach, please contact the coach to set up the process. We have had visitors at forums and trainings in the past, and we have even had school-committee members shadow a coach in their district. It is our desire to keep you informed and involved in this important initiative.

Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to supporting beginning teachers in your LEAs again this year.

As always, if you have any questions or feedback, do not hesitate to contact Hilda or Donna:

- Hilda Potrzeba, at hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov or 222-8891
- Donna Okrasinski, at donna.okrasinski@ride.ri.gov or 222-8982

7. PARCC readiness updates due November 1 – *Action Item*

Please see this notice from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research

Over the course of the next six weeks, there are two major tasks that LEAs must undertake in order to

ensure PARCC Readiness. LEAs must update their school inventories and complete the Readiness Survey. Please see the complete instructions about these tasks, posted on the RIDE website, at:

[http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/DOCS/PARCC/PARCC Technology Readiness Tool 2012 Update.pdf](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/DOCS/PARCC/PARCC_Technology_Readiness_Tool_2012_Update.pdf).

These tasks must be completed by **November 1**.

If you need your PARCC Readiness Tool password reset, have questions, or need any other help, please e-mail Mike Ferry, at Michael.Ferry@ride.ri.gov, or Jaime Viti, at Jaime.Viti@ride.ri.gov.

8. RIDE completes processing of all certification applications

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

We are pleased to announce that the certification staff has completed the processing of all certification applications that have been submitted to RIDE for renewal or for the issuance of new or additional certificates areas. As such, you may verify the certification status of any educator through the RICERT system. A certification in “eval review” status in the RICERT system indicates that RIDE has received and processed the application and that it is now being evaluated by certification specialists. Thank you for

your patience as we worked to address the large number of renewal applications that were received this year.

9. New Student Learning Objective samples posted on RIDE website

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

New Student Learning Objective (SLO) samples for library media and career and technology have been added to the RIDE website. The samples are not meant to be exemplars and do not all look the same, as SLOs are incredibly context-specific. Rather, they illustrate the diversity of choices educators make while crafting SLOs in different content-areas and grade-spans. We hope that viewing an array of high-quality samples helps educators as they participate in the SLO process.

Educators can access all of the SLO samples on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/SLO.aspx>.

10. *Reminder:* RIDE to host in-person SLO Peer Review and Support Sessions

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE is hosting two in-person Student Learning Objective (SLO) Peer Review and Support Sessions.

The sessions have been scheduled for 4 – 6 p.m. on **September 25**, at Cranston High School East, and for 4 – 6 p.m. on **October 2**, at the Middletown Administrative Building. The sessions are designed for evaluators and teacher leaders and will focus on how to support teachers in writing high-quality SLOs. Participants will have the opportunity to collaborate with educators from other schools and districts to build their capacity for assisting teachers through the SLO writing and revision process. Considering how integral SLOs are to the evaluation and support process, this is a great opportunity to receive some additional support and to build local capacity.

Educators can register by going to the Workshop Calendar in eRIDE, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

Other:

11. Applications sought for Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

The Prudential Foundation and the National Association of Secondary School Principals are seeking applications from Rhode Island students in grades 5 – 12 for the 18th annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. The awards honor outstanding community service by young people. The Rhode Island award winners at the middle- and high-school levels will receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., for four days of recognition, as well as a \$1,000 award. For more information, see:

<http://spirit.prudential.com>

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>